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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 03 VIENNA 001224

SIPDIS

STATE FOR EUR/PGI - BUCKNEBERG AND EUR/AGS - VIKMANIS-KELLER

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SUBJECT: GWOT ASSESSMENT: POST FEEDBACK: VIENNA

REF: STATE 60796

Classified By: Ambassador W.L. Lyons Brown. Reasons: 1.4 (b) and (d).

1. (S) Summary: Austria contributes constructively to the fight against terrorism. Austria is training and equipping Iraqi police, it has been an ally against terrorist financing, and it leads major programs to strengthen border policing in Eastern Europe and Central Asia. Austria is currently considering a military deployment to support Afghan elections. Nevertheless, the situation in Austria presents significant challenges. The most important is a propensity to pursue what Austrians call "constructive engagement" with countries of concern to the U.S. We can meet these challenges on four levels: first, we should base our initiatives on as broad an international consensus as possible. Practically speaking, a UN mandate is the minimum necessary to obtain Austrian participation in military operations. Second, we must provide precise information to support policy requests to Austria. Third, we should engage Austria in the process of strategy development. Finally, an investment of time -- in meetings with Austrian officials and high-level visits to Austria -- can win practical cooperation. End Summary.

AUSTRIA AS A CONTRIBUTOR

2. (SBU) Austria has made important contributions to the fight against terrorism. Some notable successes:

-- (SBU) Support to Iraq: Four Austrian trainers have served at the Iraqi Police Academy in Jordan since November 2003. The Austrians were the third contingent (after the American and British) to arrive. Their numbers are small, but they are comparable to contingents from similarly-sized countries. In addition, the Austrians provided in-kind assistance of police uniforms, helmets and shields with a value of approximately \$10 million. More broadly, Austria pledged a total of 16.4 million Euros in credit guarantees (some 10.2 million Euros) and humanitarian assistance at the October 2003 Madrid Donors Conference for Iraq. Austria has also written off approximately \$1.8 billion in Iraqi debt.

-- (C) Military Support in Afghanistan: Austria has maintained an almost continuous participation in ISAF. It was among the first ISAF contributors, with approximately 70 troops in Afghanistan for the initial deployment period. Since the summer of 2003, it has kept limited numbers of specialists in the country. There are now three Austrian staff officers at ISAF headquarters in Kabul under a parliamentary authorization for up to 10 such officers. In addition, parliament has authorized up to three Austrian officers to participate in the UN Assistance Missions Afghanistan (UNAMA). The Austrian government is currently considering a military deployment to support the elections in Afghanistan in the Fall of 2005 with approximately 70 troops for three months.

-- (SBU) Military Support to Peacekeeping Missions: With more peacekeepers deployed now than ever, Austria plays an important role in maintaining stability. Some 850 Austrian soldiers are in Kosovo and Bosnia, and approximately 370 are in the Golan Heights. In addition, Austria maintains military missions of one to five soldiers in UN, OSCE and EU operations in Serbia and Montenegro, Macedonia, Croatia, Albania, Georgia, Cyprus, Ethiopia, Eritrea, and Western Sahara. Austria plans a small deployment to support peacekeeping efforts in Sudan.

-- (SBU) Support to U.S. Military Movements: Since mid-2003, Austria has approved all requests for U.S. military ground transits and overflights. These total some 10,000 each year, and the operations tempo continues at that rate.

-- (SBU) Regional Security in Central Asia: Austria is the lead country in two programs providing training and equipment to Central Asian countries: the Central Asian Border Security Initiative (CABSI) and the Vienna Central Asia Initiative (VICA). These multi-year, multi-million dollar programs coordinate EU, UN and other international programs to provide planning, training, equipment and funding for border security in Central Asia.

-- (SBU) Regional Security in Europe: Austria initiated and manages a cooperative arrangement among Interior Ministries of the new EU countries to its east. This group, the "Salzburg Forum," meets at ministerial level each year and at expert levels throughout the year. This has the important effect of laying the groundwork for the extension of the EU's external ("Schengen") border to the frontiers of the new members.

-- (C) Terrorist Financing: Austria has firmly supported listing Hizballah in its entirety as a terrorist organization. Domestically, Austria passed and implemented new legislation in the past year to intensify controls over the movement of funds from illegal sources. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) has reported that Austria's legal and institutional framework against money laundering and terrorist financing is comprehensive.

-- (SBU) Judicial Cooperation: The U.S. and Austria have signed follow-up protocols to the bilateral extradition and mutual legal assistance treaties to reflect developments in U.S.-EU cooperation. The EU-wide arrest warrant is effective in Austria. Austria has ratified all 12 international conventions and protocols relating to terrorism.

-- (SBU) Law Enforcement and Intelligence Cooperation: Austria regularly exchanges information with, and supports the law enforcement efforts of, the U.S. and European countries. This takes place both through bilateral exchanges and through groups such as the Club of Bern and Europol, and via use of the Capriccio network. Austria monitors suspected Islamic extremists attempting to enter Austria as asylum seekers, documenting the finger prints of asylum seekers in EURODAC for sharing with its EU partners. In response to requests from other European countries for investigations of individuals in Austria suspected of participating in an Islamic extremist cell, in 2004, the Austrian Federal Agency for State Protection and Counterterrorism (BVT) undertook a broad, nine-month investigation of 65 individuals. In the past year, Austria passed legislation which allows police video surveillance of public spaces and establishes the parameters for law enforcement use of this surveillance.

CHALLENGES

13. (S) Despite this record of action against terrorism, Austrian policy presents real challenges. Most significantly, Austria continues to maintain close political and commercial ties to countries of concern to the U.S., including some which we have designated as state sponsors of terrorism. Politically, many Austrians seek a "bridge building" role as a continuing legacy of Austria's Cold War neutrality. This provides a context in which commercial deals -- which the lack of American and other competitors facilitates -- form part of a policy of "constructive engagement." While the search for business does not necessarily cause Austrians to turn soft on terrorism, Austria's approach makes it prone to take a benign view of activities which give us pause. Examples of this include contacts with Iranian entities seeking technological cooperation, especially in the biological sciences field, and approval of the sale of high-powered sniper rifles to Iran. (We convinced the Austrian government not to proceed with a formal agreement on technological cooperation, to block a continuation of rifle shipments, and to support the arrest of Iranians seeking to procure night vision goggles. In such cases, Austrian officials demand hard data supporting our contention that these activities are problematical.

14. (S) There have been media charges that Austrian authorities turn a blind eye toward the presence of terrorists in the country, as long as the terrorists undertake no activity in the country. Austrian authorities have countered publicly that they keep all suspected terrorists under close watch, and that they will take action against anyone for whom there is an arrest warrant. Privately, Austrian authorities assure us that their surveillance activities are helping to develop information on the activities of suspected terrorists, that they are fully aware of who is in the country, and that they are able to foil any operational plot before it reaches fruition. Budgetary, staffing and political constraints on Austrian authorities make these assertions suspect. Austrian federal deficits have resulted in restricted budgets for law enforcement authorities, staffing shortages have limited surveillance of suspected extremists, and ongoing reorganizations of the BVT have had some detrimental consequences on the BVT's effectiveness. In addition, many Austrian politicians appear to believe that in the absence of clear evidence of terrorist activity, Austria serves its best interests by not undertaking actions which could result in Austria becoming a target for terrorists.

15. (C) In the field of terrorist financing, Austria, like many EU member countries, has not been able to respond quickly to our requests to list front organizations posing as charities. Austria cites a need for information with which it could defend such actions in court.

A WAY FORWARD

16. (S) Austria has contributed to common anti-terrorism efforts, but it has not delivered as much as it could. For one thing, although Austria's policy of "constructive engagement" with countries of concern could offer real levers for influencing those countries, Austria does not use them. More broadly, we find ourselves reacting to policy directions which are often incongruent with ours. While we have had some success in persuading the Austrians to back off or limit bad policy choices, we would prefer that those choices were never made.

17. (S) We see four levels on which to address the challenges we face.

-- (S) First, we have the best chance of gaining Austria's military capabilities and using its geostrategic location in support of military activities if there is a broad international consensus for those activities. Practically, the Austrians are unlikely to engage in military operations which do not have a formal UN mandate. Such a mandate is not a guarantee of Austrian participation. At the same time, we need to make realistic requests on the basis of thorough consultations involving the Austrians.

-- (S) Second, if we want the Austrians to stop activities with countries of concern to us, or to undertake positive initiatives, we must be prepared to provide precise information. Austrian officials will not block a commercial deal, freeze a front charity's assets, or support a diplomatic initiative on our say-so alone. They need to be convinced, and it takes timely, clear information to do this.

-- (S) Third, more broadly, if we want the Austrians to think like we do and work along similar policy lines, we should make the effort to build our strategies in fora which include the Austrians. Such fora include consultations with partners in the NATO context and discussions at the EU level on ESDP. However, they must also include bilateral discussions with Austrian officials, staff-level military talks, and engagement with Austrian think-tanks. These bilateral discussions will help shape the opinions of those who contribute to the decision-making process. The Austrians are far more likely to buy into a policy direction in whose formulation they played a role.

-- (S) Finally, with the Austrians, as with many Europeans, we need to offer deliverables in order to generate practical cooperation. The type of deliverables necessary are often intangible, coming at the level of show and protocol. High-level attention in Washington, and especially high-level participation in Austrian events, can have significant returns. As Austria takes over the EU presidency in January, our opportunities for this kind of positive reinforcement will increase. We should use them.

Brown